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THE
STATUTE
OF THE
NATION
CONSIDERED,

With respect to a
FRENCH INVASION.



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A T T 2



“ **T** HIS is a new and ingenious
“ Court-Satire, not in Verse, but
“ in excellent Prose. We do not care
“ to enter upon any particular Expla-
“ nation of such a Pamphlet, but shall
“ venture to recommend this, in the
“ gross, as the prettiest Piece of Irony
“ we have seen for some Time past.”

See Monthly Review for April, 1756.





THE
S T A T E
OF THE
N A T I O N, &c.

WHEN a Nation has been terrified with false Alarms, the Credit of true ones will gradually diminish. Time, which discovers Truth, makes us ashamed of groundless Fears. But the Experience of twelve Months past has shewn, that Time is not our only Reliance in this Case. It requires Thought and Recollection, to resist the Impression, which Men in a Panic make upon each other.

We have long been apprehensive of an Invasion from *France*. Repeated Accounts from the *French* Coast have confirmed our Fears. The Government has wisely prepared for the Reception of the Enemy. But, even the Armaments for our Defence have heightened our Sense of the Danger:

As there are not many, who look farther than their own personal Concerns, it is Matter of no great Astonishment, that so many should be misled in what seems to concern them, only in common with their Country. And as it is unnatural to some Men, and unpleasant to others, to think and reflect, the greater Part of us have chosen, rather to be frightened out of their Senses, than to harass their Minds with Inquiries into the real State of the Danger.

HOWEVER, the Bulk of Mankind do not deserve the Ridicule, to which the Event in these Cases may seem to expose them. Very few of us know much of the internal Strength of both Nations; whether the *French* are in Condition to attempt an Invasion; and how far the present State of this Kingdom favours the Design; yet both these Questions should be asked, before we terrify ourselves and others, with Dangers which may prove imaginary.

WHILST every real Friend to his Country will contribute his Share towards averting the Evils he apprehends, it may be of some Use to lay before the Public such Considerations, as may dissipate the Fear. There is Merit in not despairing of the Commonwealth; and tho' every Man may be mistaken, in prognosticating Contingencies; yet the Mistakes, which are founded in Candour and Benevolence, and tend to cherish and comfort a whole Nation, are at least intitled to Pardon.

How far the *French* are in Condition to attempt an Invasion, is best known to those great Personages among us, who are minutely acquainted with the Secrets of the *French* Cabinet, with the State of the Finances, of the Army, and the Navy of *France*. They know as well, what Schemes the Enemy is meditating, and capable of executing, as what Measures it is right and expedient for themselves to take. But this Knowledge, which our Ministers undoubtedly

undoubtedly possess in a consummate Degree, will not alone determine the Point. The Question will still remain, Whether this Kingdom be the proper Spot for the Exertion of the Power of *France*? Unless this should appear, from a View of the Temper and Disposition of our own People, from the State of the Government, and the Characters of those who administer it, our Fears will make as indifferent a Figure, before the Invasion, as Pussillanimity would, after the Enemy is landed.

THE Circumstances, requisite to fit a Nation for Submission to an Invader, are full as many in Number as those which are requisite to make a vigorous Defence. The Nation must be in great Measure defenceless. Her Troops must be imaginary, Paper-Troops, which, though it is become a military Term, is found by Experience to be not quite so significant in War, as in Peace.

THE Invader must have some Reliance upon a considerable Number of the People. He must know their Passions to be alienated from their Country, from the Constitution and the Government of it. He must be well assured of a Disposition to receive them as a Deliverer, especially in an Island; for he cannot hope for Success, where he is universally considered as an Enemy.

OR the whole Body of the People must be so notoriously corrupt, as to be ripe for a Sale of their Country. The Leaders must be mercenary, and the Nation in general must be venal, before the Enemy can make an Impression. This Venality must be attended with such a Degree of Stupidity, as hinders them from comparing the Price with the Purchase. They must be ready to sacrifice any thing but their Lives and personal Prospects, to some immediate infamous Advantage.

BESIDES all this, the Invader must depend not only upon the Venality of the Leaders, but upon the natural Disposition of some of them, whether it be

founded in the Prejudices of Education, or in Hereditary Prejudices, or in an Ambition, which cannot be fully gratified without a Revolution. He must depend too upon the Temper of a great Number of the People, either as sensible of some legal Oppression, or as disposed, by an Indifference, studiously inculcated, to their own Constitution, to embrace with Alacrity the Changes he promises to introduce.

AND those, whom he corrupts, must be dealt with before-hand. The Bargain must be concerted by Emissaries. A Correspondence must be carried on by Connivance; for it can hardly escape Discovery, unless it has been previously carried on with those, who may have Power to prevent the Design.

THESE, and many other Difficulties, would discourage a Nation of Heroes from embarking an Army. And will it be said, that this is a genuine Description of the People of *Great Britain*? It could not decently be said, if it were true. But as it is notoriously the Reverse of the Character of this Nation, what Apology shall we make for those, who are anxious about Dangers, which must have some such Foundation, as the State of Things here represented, before they can really exist.

HOWEVER, some Allowance must be made for natural Timidity, and some for that contagious Kind, which is too rapid in its Progress, to admit of Reflections upon the internal State of the Kingdom. I shall, therefore, instead of reproaching my Countrymen, comfort them, with the clearest Evidence, that they have nothing to apprehend from the Enemy; for a People so disposed, and so circumstanced, as this Nation will appear to be, will not probably be Conquered, though they should be Invaded.

THERE are not many Nations more inflexibly Uncorrupt, than the Inhabitants of this Island. Whether it be the Effect of Trade, or of the Prosperity

perity which follows it, the People are mighty little acquainted with Indirect Ways of acquiring Wealth. Hence it is our Happiness, that they have the Election of their Representatives in Parliament. Foreigners stand amazed to see the Disinterestedness, which distinguishes the Nation on such Occasions, it being not only certain, that there are very few Instances of Corruption upon Record, but that even the Suspicion of it is guarded against, by the Multitude of Oaths that are taken. That Gentlemen are very ambitious of the Honour of representing so pure and upright a Body of Men, is not at all inconsistent with this Character of the People; for the Candidate never ventures to build his Hopes of Success, in Publick at least, upon any other Ground, than a strong Profession, subscribed by himself, of his invariable Attachment to the Interest of his Country.

FROM the Electors let us turn our Eyes to the Elected. Their Trust being of a Nature highly Valuable, they have no sooner estimated it duly, than they resolve to Discharge it. In order thereto, they weigh, with the closest Attention, and the purest Impartiality, every the most remote Argument relating to national Points, before they determine, on which Side it becomes them to Vote. The Fatigue of Attendance may impair the Judgment, and the Perplexity of Arguments may sometimes keep the Understanding in Suspence; but the Merit is the greater, when upon a Division it appears, that the Question hath been Rightly decided, by an eminent Majority. This compensates for all the Patience requisite to hear the Arguments, which are, Ineffectually, urged by the Minority.

If the Great and Powerful should chance to have a favorite Point to carry, they can have but one Method of supporting it, the Weight and Solidity

of their Reasons. It would be the greatest of all Absurdities, to suppose a faithful Representative of the People influenced by Hope or Fear. The Proofs which are laid before him must Overpower him, before he assents, for his Judgment cannot yield to trifling Arguments.

BUT if there were in his Mind some latent Infirmary, which might incline him to an open undue Influence, yet the Question could not be affected by such Infirmary, unless he had a Standard to resort to. The Hands, from which only the Temptation could proceed, will not, Professedly, administer it, Themselves and their Measures being superior to any such Support.

NOR would the Fear of Displeasure be better grounded, than the Hope of Reward. The Parliament being free, every Member of it is so. And as no one can be said to have received or expected any Emolument, in Consideration for his Vote; so neither can it be affirmed, that any one has been removed from an Office of Trust, or Profit, or Honour, in Consequence of his Parliamentary Conduct.

IF future Historians do Justice to our Days, we shall make a noble Figure in the Eyes of Posterity. Whilst the King of *France* is banishing his Parliament, for contravening his Will and Pleasure, a *British* Senate continues so unmolested in the Liberty of speaking, that Men in Power, far from resenting, magnanimously approve of the Resolutions taken, after a long and warm Debate.

THIS uncorrupt State of the Parliament renders that august Body universally respected. Their Resolutions are in themselves an Evidence of the Rectitude of a Measure; and it is no small Comfort to those, who have not Understanding to see the various Utilities of Parliamentary Proceedings, that they

they have such abundant Reason to confide in the Wisdom and Integrity of their Representatives.

HENCE the whole Nation wears one general Aspect of Contentment. The Increase of a Debt of Eighty Millions, gives not indeed so universal a Satisfaction, as might arise from the Reduction of a Tax; but the less the Reasons in Cases of that Kind are understood, the stronger is the Confidence in those, who Act and Reason above the Reach of vulgar Capacities.

SOME Measures will perplex the Judgments of the most passive Observers of public Transactions. It is not an easy Matter, for Instance, to comprehend the Utility of the late Treaty with *Russia*. That 55,000 Men are hired to invade and plunder the Territory of an Ally, may be very Wise and Politic; but the Wisdom and Policy of it are not immediately, at first Sight, obvious. That a subsequent Treaty is concluded with that Ally, to render those 55,000 Men useless, gives somewhat more Light into the Matter, but still leaves the Question, in some Degree, undecided, why they were ever hired? That 79,000 Men are considered as the necessary *British Quota*, towards the Defence of any Part of the Empire, is a difficult Problem. How twelve Ships of the Line shall be spared, in return for 12,000 Men, and how 140,000 Pounds annually shall be paid for only the Promise of 67,000 Men, at a Time, when our Credit is somewhat stretched in the Loan of no more than two Millions, for necessary *British* Purposes, is not perfectly clear and intelligible. But there is one Argument, which quiets the Minds of a People, so unanimously disposed to Contentment. The Treaties with *Russia* and *Hesse-Cassel*, have received the Approbation of an EMINENT MAJORITY, as could have been wished, had their Utilities been much more Manifest.

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THIS contented State of the Nation is not in the least a Matter of Wonder, if we consider how strict a Regard is paid to the Interests of the People, in Instances, which may in the least affect their constitutional Rights. Fundamental Laws are treated as Sacred and Inviolable. No public Persons will venture to give their Assent to a Breach of them, or of any Clause in them, whilst Parliaments subsist; it being extremely perilous for the greatest Subject to fall under the Displeasure of those jealous Assertors of the Rights of the People.

THE publick Money is scrupulously applied to the Uses to which it is appropriated. Even in a real Exigency, a Misapplication would not be hazarded; and consequently in a Case where the Exigency is doubtful, the Payment would be deferred, till the Representatives of those, whose Money it is, had been regularly consulted. If any great Officer of the Revenue should withhold his Concurrence from a contrary Measure, he would not only receive the Applause of the People, but his Fidelity would naturally be rewarded by strong Marks of the Favour of the Crown.

THE only Recommendation to an Office of Trust is the Qualification of the Candidate. Indeed Candidates are not very numerous. The Crowds, which are observed to attend the Levees of the Great, are led thither by mere personal Devotion and Respect. There is a Pleasure in admiring an exalted Character; and those who have a Taste for heroic Virtues, take such Opportunities of gratifying it. Men of Merit are sought out, and dragged from their Obscurity, to be Witnesses of the disinterested Disposition of public Favours. Promises are very seldom made, and when made, are most religiously observed; it being needless to gain Friends by a Traffic with Words, when the good Will

Will of the whole Nation is so effectually secured by Measures.

As Men of Merit increase, it is fit there should be a proportionable Increase of Rewards. And tho' this may chance to be attended with the Inconvenience of dividing an Office, in a Country where Offices are so untufferably scarce, yet a Step of that Kind is never taken, without the most tender Regard to those Fundamental Laws, which secure the People against an Increase of the Power of the Crown.

THE Administration consists of Men of the Purest Morals, of the Greatest Fortunes, of the most Distinguished Abilities, and of the soundest Principles in the Kingdom. The great Minds, which, with a perfect Harmony and Union, compose the Ministry, will immediately discern, that this is not meant to flatter them. They never struggled for Power, and were never tenacious of it. It devolved into their Hands, in the natural Course of Things; and whenever it slides out of their Hands, the Change too will be natural, for no Act of theirs will be wilfully calculated to forward it.

THEY have the Assistance of the ablest Men in every Profession, particularly in that honourable Profession, without the Help of which Laws might be misinterpreted by the mere Rules of common Sense. For it is scarce credible, how much the right Interpretation of Laws depends upon a Habit of distinguishing, and sometimes in Cases, where the Distinction doth not arise so visibly from a real Difference in the Subject, as from the Acuteness of those, whose Province it is to split Words, and annihilate a plain Argument, by Dint of Refinement.

THE Execution of Laws is as inflexibly Rigid, as the Manner of interpreting them is Critically Nice. No Offender of any Kind has a Chance to escape

escape the utmost Severities of a Prosecution. Neither his Power, nor his Connexion with Men in Power, will in the least avail him; for the Execution of his Sentence cannot depend upon any other Consideration, than the Nature and Circumstances of his Crime. This undeviating Justice with respect to Criminals, is in some Degree felt by immoral Men in general. Profligates of every Kind, even in high Life, are so much discountenanced, that an immoral Character would meet with as cool a Reception at a Levee, as an Insignificant one. This Accounts in some Measure for that general Propensity to Virtue, in every Part of the Kingdom, especially in the Metropolis; insomuch, that an Invader would be astonished to find so few Men of abandoned Characters, or desperate Fortunes, ready to avail themselves of a publick Confusion.

THE Dispatch with which all national Affairs are transacted, is so remarkable, that foreign Courts have no other Way of accounting for it, than by supposing our Ministers in one incessant Hurry. Every interesting Intelligence is forthwith applied to the Benefit of the Public. We had a memorable Instance of this in the Advices which were received of the *French* Encroachments in *America*. The most effectual Measures were immediately taken to stop the Progress of the Enemy, as soon as it was known that a Fort had been erected upon the *British* Territory.

THE Measures to secure Dominions, unconnected with *Great Britain*, are indeed said to have been taken before any due Provision had been made to secure the *British* Dominions. But the Inference to be drawn from hence does Honour to our Administration, for it is an Evidence, that the Principles of Justice and Gratitude are more active in their Breasts, than the national Part of the Principle of Self-Preservation.

THERE

THERE are besides uncommon Marks of Wisdom in this Piece of Conduct. It was necessary to Contract the Danger, which appeared so Extensive, at the Beginning of the Rupture. And though the Spot, whence it was driven, was not, strictly speaking, *British* Territory, yet by that seeming Dispersion of our Strength, in the subsidiary Engagements on the Continent, we enjoy the national Glory, of having bid Defiance to the Enemy, by sending abroad the Wealth, which should defend us at Home. It was to all *Europe* a signal Instance of the Superiority of our Councils, as well as Riches. We have provided for a War on the Continent, which Measure proclaims our Strength; and if the Enemy should find us not quite so powerfully secured at Home, yet he will be struck with Terror at the Excess of our Courage and Resolution.

DISAFFECTION, is a Word, of which the Meaning is very near forgot; for Names must die, when the Things signified by them cease to exist. A great Majority of the WHIGS have laid aside their Principles, and most of the TORIES have laid aside their Profession. It is an impertinent Inquiry, which Party has made the greater Sacrifice, since the happy Effect of these mutual Concessions hath been, that the Principles of the WHIGS, and the Name of the TORIES, no longer obstruct the Peace and Unanimity of this Nation. Some little Distinction will still subsist; but it amounts to no more than this, that WHIGS are characterized by their Conformity to TORIES; and TORIES are known by the Officiousness with which they assume the NAME of WHIGS.

THE Bone of Contention being thus broken, the Excesses of either Side are no longer alarming. If a WHIG should plead the Cause of the Constitution, with a Sublimity of Thought and Language, which could not flow merely from Abilities, natural or acquired,

quired, which must therefore be the Effusion of a Heart warmed with Zeal for his Country, the general Observation would be, that he makes no Impression. If a Gentleman of opposite Principles should slip inadvertently into his old Professions, it is probable, that he likewise would make no Impression. He would excite neither Caution, nor Suspicion ; it being evident beyond all Doubt, that the Number of suspicious Men in this Kingdom is now reduced to Units.

HENCE it is justly deemed Slander to impute to any Man Unconstitutional Principles. The only possible Support of such a Charge must be legal Evidence, which cannot in every Case be produced, and might be refuted by this Consideration, that Persons of all Principles, as well as Persons of none, are known to be ready and willing to enter into the Service of the Government.

BUT besides all this, the Futility of such a Charge would appear from the Number and the SINCERITY of CONVERTS, who having changed their Profession upon no other Motive than the sober Conviction of their own Minds, may be, and are, as confidently relied on, as the most known active Friends to our happy Establishment. The History of Converts of all Kinds is a standing Evidence of this Truth. They are sometimes so extravagant in their Zeal, that one might suspect them of intending to burlesque their new System, were it not an undoubted Fact, that their Minds are totally divested of the old one.

To account for the Force, with which a Conversion operates, is not an easy Task ; nor does it fall directly within the Design of this Piece. It sufficiently manifests the Strength of our present Constitution, to observe that we have many Converts, and some so eminent for their Departure from the strongest Bias, that they are now, in this Time
of

of Danger, more the Objects of Confidence, than even those whose Integrity was never Blemished, never Suspected.

THESE several Observations upon the State of the Nation, it seemed expedient to lay before the Public at this Time, in order to abate, or, if possible, to remove our Fears. Had it been at all the Design of the Writer to be ludicrous, he might have furnished much higher Entertainment for his Countrymen, by describing the Terrors of a *French* Army, when resisted by the first Village after their Landing; or the ridiculous Figure they will make, in their March to the Capital, as Prisoners of War. But as the Subject will not decently admit of Ridicule, it may be a more solid Foundation for Courage, to represent the happy State of the Nation, in a true Light.

To treat an Enemy contemptuously, who might, if we were not thus internally invincible, soon shew us, how much we were mistaken in our Opinion both of ourselves and him, is Vanity, not Courage. But to survey the Kingdom, the Character of the People, and of their Governors; and upon finding, that we have a Security unknown to former Ages, or other Nations, to take Courage and repel the Audacious Invader, this is Manly *British* Fortitude.

A Nation so constituted, so governed, so well disposed, so well contented and so well affected, as every Man in *Great Britain* is at this Period, has nothing to fear. The Enemy will find himself reduced to the Exercise of mere Brute Force, which never yet prevailed against Wisdom and Virtue, against Union and Public Spirit. Whilst the People have so much Reason to be satisfied with the Integrity and Disinterestedness of their Rulers, there is no Doubt, but they will sacrifice their Vitals upon the Occasion. How much the Great will sacrifice, depends upon another Question, how much they have?

have ? Their Lives they will certainly consider as a Trifle, if we may judge from the Pleasure they take in endangering their Lives, upon Occasions much less noble, than the Defence of their Country ; and, considering how precarious and infirm the vital Substance of most of those Great Personages is ! As to their Fortunes, they will lay them at the King's Feet, in a Purse, as chearfully, as in an Address. Those who dissipate their Fortunes, can hardly be said to value them ; and those who make their Inheritance depend upon the Cast of a Dye, will doubtless not be over tenacious of it, when their Country is at Stake. Their Public Emoluments they may perhaps not treat with quite the same Indifference. It is well known, that every Man's Salary is an Acquisition of his own, and is therefore extremely dear to him, especially as it is a genuine Image of his Merit. But considering the Probity and Public Spirit of the Times, as they are above represented, it is to the highest Degree improbable, that any Man will, in a Time of Danger, make a Property of his Country ; or that a Set of Heroes, who disdain the Consideration of Life and Fortune, should traiterously stipulate an Equivalent for their Places and Pensions.

F I N I S.

